

Ancient Greece

Impact of geography

- Greece consists of mountainous peninsula and numerous islands.
- Mountains and the seas are the most important geographical influences on Greece.



Impact of geography

- The many mountain ranges caused small, independent communities to develop different ways of life.
- Their size and independence probably encouraged political participation within, and war among, the different communities.



Impact of geography

- Greece has many ports, inlets, and islands.
- The Greeks became seafarers.
- They sailed into the **Aegean**, the **Black**, and the **Mediterranean** Seas, making contact with the outside world and setting up colonies and trade throughout the Mediterranean area.



Minoan civilization

- By 2800 BCE, a Bronze Age civilization called the Minoan civilization was established at Knossos on **Crete**.
- The **Minoans** sailed to southern Greece and Egypt for trade.
- Minoan civilization on Crete suffered a catastrophe around 1450 BCE.
- Some historians believe a tidal wave caused by a volcanic eruption on the island of Thera was the cause.
- Others believe the civilization was destroyed by an invasion of mainland Greeks known as the Mycenaeans.



Artist Recreation of Knossos



Aerial View of Knossos



North Entrance - Palace of King Minos



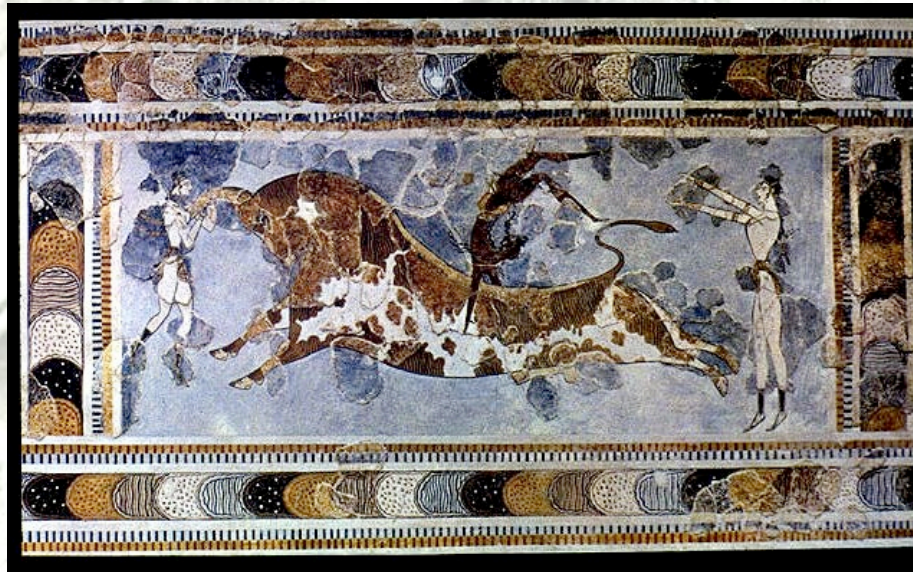
Interior - Palace of King Minos



Importance of Bull

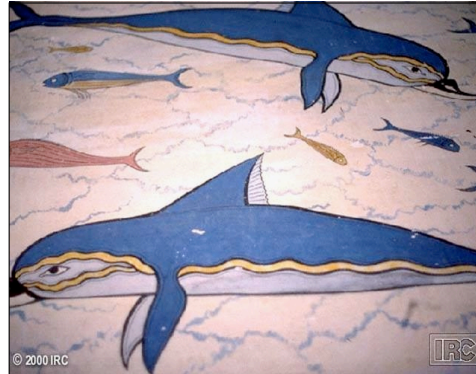


Bull Jumping Fresco



Minoan Artistic “Motifs” –

Sea creatures suggest trade and connection
to ocean; less about warfare



The Mycenaeans

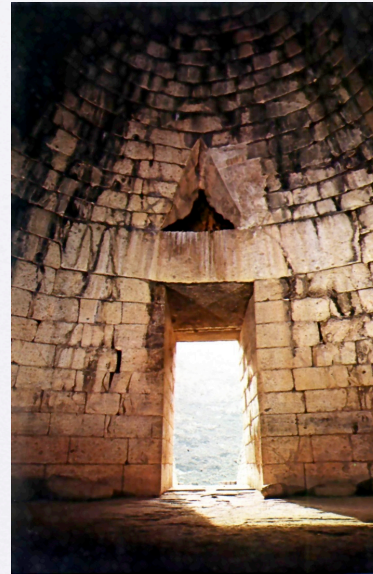
1500 – 1100 BCE

Minoan and Mycenaean Civilizations



The first Greek state: Mycenae

- Fortified city in Greece.
- Made up of an alliance of powerful monarchies, each living in a fortified center within large stone walls.
- The rest of the population lived outside these walls.
- One interesting architectural feature is the large beehive-shaped *tholos* tombs, where the royal family was buried. -->



Mycenaeans, cont'd

- Mycenaeans had a warrior culture.
- Their murals show the typical occupations of a warrior aristocracy – hunting and fighting.
- They also developed an extensive commercial network.
- Their pottery has been found throughout the Mediterranean area.
- They conquered some of the Greek islands, perhaps even Crete.



The Greeks in a Dark Age

- Period from 1100 to 800 BCE in Greece.
- A **“Dark Age”** because few records of that period exist.
- Both population and food production fell.
- Around 850 BCE, farming revived and the basis of a new Greek civilization began to be formed.
- Many Greeks emigrated to the west coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

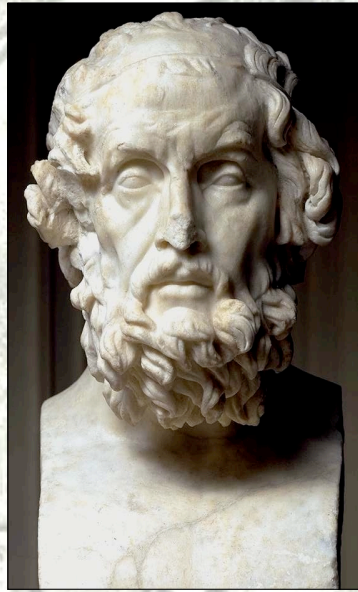


Dark age cont'd

- Iron replaced bronze during the Dark Age, improving weaponry and farming.
- During the eighth century BCE., the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet, which made reading and writing simpler.
- The works of Homer, one of the world's great poets, appeared near the end of the Dark Age.



Homer, the Blind Poet



Homer

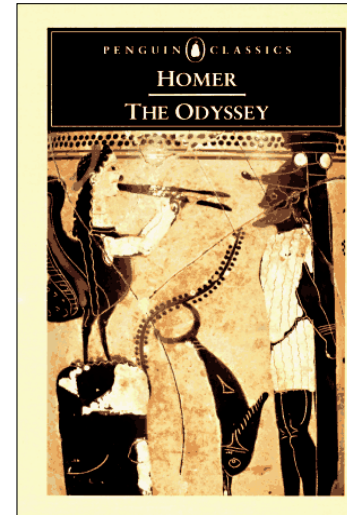
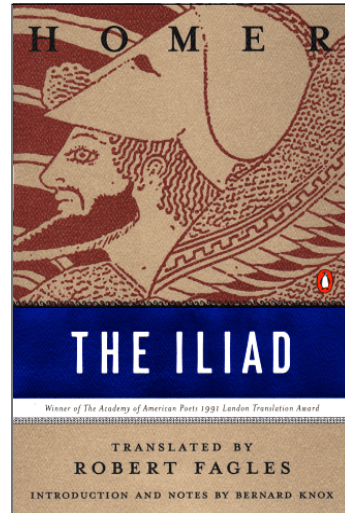
- Most famous of their supposed military adventures comes to us in the poetry of Homer.
- According to Homer, the Mycenaeans sacked the city of Troy, on the northwestern coast of modern Turkey, around 1250 BCE. Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, led them.
- Ever since Schliemann's excavation of Troy, some people have believed Homer's account is based in fact, but no one is certain.
- The Mycenaean states began to fight one another, and earthquakes damaged their civilization.
- It collapsed by 1100 BCE, after new waves of invaders moved into Greece from the north.



The Trojan War



Homer's Great Epics



The “Trojan Horse”?



The Polis: Center of Greek Life

- By 750 BCE, the **polis** (city-state) became the central focus of Greek life.
- It was a town, city, or village serving as a center where people met for political, economic, social and religious activities.
- The main gathering place was usually a hill, topped with a fortified area called the **acropolis**.
 - This was a refuge and sometimes a place for religious or other public buildings.
- Below was the **agora**, an open area for people to assemble and for a market.

Hoplites

- Developed by 700 BCE.
- Infantry who carried a shield, sword, and spear.
- Fought shoulder to shoulder in a formation called a **phalanx**.
- This close formation made the hoplites a powerful force.



Greek & Phoenician Colonization: 750–500 BCE



Greek Colonies

- Between 750 and 550 BCE., many Greeks settled distant lands.
- The growth of trade and wanting good farmland were two motives.
- Each colony became a new polis and spread Greek culture and ideas.
- The Greeks also settled along the shores of the Black Sea, setting up cities on the **Hellespont** and **Bosporus**.
- The most notable was **Byzantium**, which later was renamed Constantinople and now is called Istanbul.
- Increased trade created a new wealthy class of merchants (**nobles**) who wanted political power.

Tyranny in the City-States

- The creation of this wealthy class led to the rise of tyrants in the Greek city-states.
- Tyrants seized and kept power by using hired soldiers.
- By the end of the sixth century B.C., tyrants had fallen out of favor.
- The end of tyranny allowed new classes to participate in government.
- Some city-states became democracies, ruled by many.
- Others became oligarchies, ruled by a few.
- Athens and Sparta show the differences between these two kinds of government.

In Athens...

- The reformist aristocrat **Solon** was appointed leader in 594 BCE to handle these problems.
- In 508 BCE **Cleisthenes** became leader.
- He created a new council of five hundred to propose laws and supervise the treasury and foreign affairs.
- The assembly of all male citizens had final authority to pass laws after free and open debate.
- For this reason, Cleisthenes' reforms laid the foundation for Athenian democracy.

Read about Draco, Solon, and Cleisthenes in your text (p. 118) and write a brief synopsis of the development of democratic reforms in Athens. You'll build on this in our next class.